

# Propaganda

*He says, she says, they say, we say — who do you believe?*

By Staff Sgt. Krishna M. Gamble

Hanoi Hannah tells American prisoners of war that *"nothing is more confused than to be ordered into a war to die or to be maimed for life without the faintest idea of what's going on,"* and then plays a rock and roll song that was popular in the late 1960's. The bewitching voice of this self-proclaimed "fragrance of autumn" can be heard in the background of the A&E movie, *Faith of My Fathers*, based on the five-year imprisonment of U.S. Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.).

This mind game was also used on service-members in 1991 by Baghdad Betty who told Soldiers that Bart Simpson was sleeping with their wives. And it is being used today by insurgent groups in Iraq, Afghanistan and many other nations currently in conflict with U.S. forces to hurt morale, sway public opinion, and recruit and cause dissension between nations.

Insurgent news reports describe U.S. troops as incompetent and falsely reports that U.S. precision weapons technology causes frequent heavy collateral damage, bombing of schools, homes and hospitals with heavy loss of life. Iraqi insurgents distribute leaflets, release videos, and broadcast messages on radio and television portraying U.S. troops as friends of Zionists in Israel, colonial occupiers wanting to steal Iraq's oil and those who commit atrocities and war crimes against the noble mujahedin.

"In Iraq, I saw one flyer being distributed by the Black Flag element vowing to kill U.S. Soldiers unless we surrendered when we saw their flag," said one Soldier who spoke on the condition of anonymity. This Soldier deployed to Iraq with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., from 2003-2004. "It didn't work. It just let us know where they were; so they stopped flying their flag."

But Soldiers today face a machine that is more sophisticated — the Internet. Insurgent messages stream in from pop-ups, web sites, and chat rooms encouraging those who want to

leave war zones to drop their weapons and seek refuge with them. Pleas from those identifying themselves as children pray on the emotions of Soldiers and Internet surfers.

"A Soldier has to do a little research on his own," said Staff Sgt. Daniel McDonald, team sergeant, 443<sup>rd</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion, Warwick, R.I., who recently returned from Iraq. "You have to read the headlines and compare the notes, so to speak. You compare it with what you know is truth, because you're living and breathing it, against what you see and read."

Propaganda, defined by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis of New York, means deliberately designing messages so that people will be influenced to think or act in predetermined ways. Web site propaganda is known as "passive propaganda." Dr. Marc Sageman of the University of Pennsylvania said in a *Jane's Intelligence Review* article that passive propaganda is most often used by groups that fall under the "Global Salafist Jihad." It is most closely related to the



**Insurgent activities use Web sites such as Albasrah.net above to garner support, sympathy and membership in their organizations.**

root causes of Islamic violence.

Goals of passive propaganda are to pit Muslims against non-Muslims, show globalization of Muslim suffering and demonstrate alienation from Muslim regimes. Web site propaganda solutions are to reestablish rule of the Khalifa in order to prepare for future consolidation of the Islamic state, the conquest of non-Muslim lands, and by participating in Jihad in non-Western conflict zones. Specifically, violent Jihad against "all enemies of Islam" as advocated by Al Qaeda.

"We used our Iraqi interpreters to translate a variety of things like local newspapers, graffiti on public buildings or posters displayed at public centers. All these methods are useful to determine the meaning of the information out there and to determine what is worth believing and what isn't," McDonald said.

Persuading rather than compelling physically, psychological operations (PSYOPS) rely on logic, fear, desire or other



Photo from Albasrah.net

***The message projected by insurgent propaganda is of innocent Iraqis being abused by the “occupation army.” The caption released with this photo on Albasrah.net reads: So if this was your daughter, how would you feel ?***

mental factors. The cornerstone of PSYOPS is truth, credibly presented to convince a given audience to cease resistance or take actions favorable to friendly forces ([http://www.soc.mil/usacapoc/capoc\\_default.htm](http://www.soc.mil/usacapoc/capoc_default.htm)). But what is truth? The American truth is that U.S. forces are there to help the Iraqi people achieve a democratic society. American troops and allied forces bring food, medical aid and other supplies to the country. The Iraqi truth is that U.S. troops are there to steal Iraq's oil and commit war crimes against the noble mujahedin.

“The Iraqi government runs a propaganda machine involving a high-level of sophistication and also a high-level of cynicism,” said Hamish

Robertson, ABC Radio correspondent in a Feb. 27, 2003 broadcast. “A tragic example was the tactic used during the last Gulf War of co-locating civilians and military targets and then allowing CNN to film the horrific consequences. Other techniques include creating the impression that the Iraqi authorities are co-operating with the UN weapons inspectors and blaming UN sanctions for the widespread suffering among Iraq's civilian population, especially children. So it's a fairly safe bet that the Iraqi people are not getting the full story.”

On Friday, April 16, 2003, a videotape showing a uniformed man who identified himself as a missing U.S. Soldier was broadcasted on the Arabic-language television network Al-Jazeera. The videotape showed six men holding rifles and pistols standing behind a Soldier seated on the ground and wearing a U.S. Army uniform, who gives his name as Spc. Keith Maupin. Here is a quote from the videotape:

“He is in good health and being treated

based on the tenets of Islamic law for the treatment of Soldiers taken hostage. We will keep him until we trade him for our prisoners in the custody of the U.S. enemy. We want them to know — and the whole world to know — that when we took him in, he came out of his tank holding a white flag and he lay face down on the ground, just like other Soldiers.”

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***Staff Sgt. Daniel McDonald***

***443<sup>rd</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion, Warwick, R.I.***



***This snapshot taken from Al Basrah.net comes from the Abu Ghraib section of the Web site that definitely fueled the tensions of not only the insurgents, but the entire civilized world. The depiction is that of Pfc. Lynndie England showing the strong arm of America.***

Iraqi militants allegedly killed Maupin after holding him hostage for nearly three months, saying the killing was because the U.S. government did not change its policy in Iraq, as reported by Al-Jazeera Television. Maupin was assigned to the 724<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company, 88<sup>th</sup> Regional Readiness Command, an Army Reserve unit out of Bartonville, Ill. He has been promoted twice since he was declared missing in action, first from private first class to specialist, and then to sergeant in absentia. As of April 6, 2005 he is the only U.S. Soldier unaccounted for in Iraq.

“I don't think the Iraqis believe much of what was told to them. Most can't read, so they rely on pictures and Al Jazeera broadcasts, which was when most of the large attacks against us occurred,” Soldier X said. “Although some of them don't have a formal education like we have, the Iraqis are very intelligent.”



And so are the people around the world watching the war unfold. Insurgents have killed 600 Iraqis since the new government was formed and recent reports from the International Institute of Strategic Studies indicate that “it will take up to five years to create anything close to an effective indigenous force able to impose and guarantee order across the country.” These endless reports of insurgent attacks, troops killed in combat, and children suffering has a profound effect on Soldiers, families, civilians, government officials and the enemy.

“Television is probably the most effective technique being used to whip up passions and keep recalcitrant citizens in line, or otherwise promote nationalistic ideas,” said Leonard Sussman, a senior scholar in international communications at Freedom House, New York, in a recent *U.S. News and World Report* article.

“My message to my Soldiers is that we’re here, we’re going to accomplish the mission, and we’re going to show dignity and respect to the Iraqi people,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Samuel Rhodes, Sr., Task Force 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 11<sup>th</sup>

Armored Cavalry Regiment, Kalsu, Iraq. “I think that Iraqis are going to be very successful in the future.”

The U.S. State Department launched a series of multimillion-dollar programs designed to improve America’s image and win the hearts and minds of the Arab and Muslim world, but troubling questions have emerged over whether an elaborate marketing campaign can be effective in a region where mistrust of the United States is nearly universal. Steven Kull, director of the Center on Policy Attitudes, said that when Americans look at events in the Middle East they do not have a clear and simple response.

“The extent of conflict and instability they see bewilders them, and they do not see a side they identify with,” Kull said.

“I’ve been out and about in Iraq for the last 24 months and I have not had a confrontation where there are Iraqis who don’t like us being there,” Rhodes said. “They were very receptive, open-minded and most of them speak English.”

So, how can one recognize propaganda? It could be considered as propaganda if any information, ideas, doctrines or special appeals are used to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes or behavior of a specific group. It will call for a person to take some sort of action or draw a conclusion based on half-truths. Propaganda is most often associated with negative campaigns used to rally support or sympathy.

Insurgent groups are trying to portray U.S. troops as evil, uncaring about Iraqis and unable to provide a safe, stable environment for Iraqi citizens. They claim that the United States is misleading the public about its goal in Iraq. Insurgents use the Internet to exploit bad public relations for the U.S., i.e. prisons at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, in hopes of gaining Muslim support to defeat the “infidels.”

It is said that Germany lost World War I because of propaganda. It collapsed spiritually. Adolf Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, “The more modest its intellectual ballast, the more exclusively it takes into consideration the emotions of the masses, the more effective [propaganda] will be.”



Albarash.net

*Fliers, leaflets, posters, and magazine covers such as the one pictured above are distributed via the Internet on sites such as [www.ramadhan.org](http://www.ramadhan.org); [www.khilafah.dk/explore/explore.html](http://www.khilafah.dk/explore/explore.html); [www.khilafah.com.pk](http://www.khilafah.com.pk); [www-personal.umich.edu/~luqman](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~luqman); and [www.khilafah.com/home](http://www.khilafah.com/home). Several of these Internet sites have been closed or renamed. Right, blogging, a new Internet craze for servicemembers and thier families, also serves as another means of access for insurgents to target potential supporters.*

### Iraqi Web logs

- Baghdad Burning
- Hammorabi
- Iraq the model
- A Family in Baghdad
- Iraqi American
- Pictures in Baghdad
- Iraqi letter to America
- Baghdadee
- Dear Raed
- Nabil's blog
- Iraq and Iraqis
- Raed in the middle
- Baghdad Update
- Baghdad Dweller
- G in Baghdad
- Disgruntled Americans

### Arab and Middle East Web logs

- From My Rock
- Mahmood's Den
- Angry Arab
- Arab Street Files
- Israellycool
- Arab Blog Count
- Big Pharaoh
- Free Arab Forum
- The Religious Police
- Kuwait Unplugged
- Best Arab Blogs